

Community Synagogue of Rye, NY

CODE OF ETHICS

INTRODUCTION

The concept of *Community* is fundamental to all of us at Community Synagogue of Rye (CSR). CSR is a sacred community, based on core Jewish values and our covenantal relationship with God.

Building and protecting CSR's community is explicitly part of [Our Vision Statement](#), where we declare our aspiration to be "*a caring Jewish community that adds meaning and purpose to our lives. ...We encourage an atmosphere of warmth, support, diversity, and respect, acting in accord with Reform Jewish values.*"

When we conscientiously behave ethically and with civility, CSR becomes a safer, more welcoming, and more sacred environment. To help us achieve this goal, we of CSR are providing and promoting to all congregants and their families, clergy and staff, potential new congregants and, indeed, to all people who pass through our doors, a Code of Ethics. Our Code sets forth our expectations for adherence to standards of conduct for our congregants and their families, clergy, staff, visitors, and guests, whether participating in a CSR activity that is in the building, online, or offsite. The Code consists of the following two documents:

I: Standards for Ethical and Civil Conduct.

Our [Standards for Ethical and Civil Conduct](#) provide clear guidelines for ethical and civil conduct, reinforce our community's values, and positively influence each person's behavior.

II: Procedures for Addressing Allegations of Unethical or Uncivil Behavior.

CSR, through its [Ethics Team](#), which will receive allegations of unethical or uncivil behavior and will convene *ad hoc* in response to that allegation, is committed to investigate promptly and take appropriate actions relating to any reported violations of CSR's Standards for Ethical and Civil Conduct.

- The Ethics Team understands that, as a sacred community, healing and reconciliation are vital considerations, and will strive to balance the Jewish principles of judgment (*din*) and compassion (*rachamim*).

I: STANDARDS FOR ETHICAL AND CIVIL CONDUCT

We of Community Synagogue of Rye, NY (CSR) are united by our commitment to make CSR a welcoming, safe, spiritual home. As participants in our sacred community, we hold ourselves to the highest standards of personal and professional integrity.

CSR's [Standards for Ethical and Civil Conduct](#) specifies expectations for ethical and civil behavior and for adherence to standards of conduct for our congregants and their families, clergy, staff, visitors, and guests, whether participating in a CSR activity that is in the building, online, or offsite.

Our Code flows from three simple principles:

1. We have a responsibility to conduct ourselves ethically and hold ourselves accountable for our actions.
2. We treat others with respect and courtesy.
3. We value and practice compassion and forgiveness.

The focus is on how we should act personally and how we should treat each other. When these principles are understood and practiced by everyone, the sanctity and civility of our CSR community is strengthened.

WE EXEMPLIFY HOLINESS (K'DUSHAH)

CSR welcomes all who wish to engage with our sacred community.

- We embrace everyone without regard to religious background, age, ability, race, ethnicity, nationality, gender, gender identity, sexual orientation, marital status, or socioeconomic status.

- We strive to make all who participate in our community feel a sense of belonging, with the expectation that their ideas and concerns can be openly stated and responded to with respect.
- To that end, congregants and staff members will:
 - Conduct themselves with good manners and common courtesy.
 - Refrain from offensive speech, negative talk, gossip, and slander (*lashon hara*) about matters relating to members of the CSR community, whether in person or on social media.
 - Encourage open discussion, while maintaining confidences.
 - Express openness and willingness to engage with all other congregants and staff members and support one another's work.

WE STRIVE FOR JUSTICE (TZEDEK) WITH COMPASSION (RACHAMIM)

CSR believes everyone entering our sacred space has the right to feel safe and respected, and that we are morally and ethically responsible for one another (*kol yisrael areivim zeh baze*).

- We treat others with respect, dignity, fairness, and compassion.
- We oppose bullying, including any unwanted behavior that degrades, humiliates, or oppresses another. Verbal, physical, or cyberbullying is never acceptable.
- We do not tolerate sexual harassment, including unwelcome sexual advances, requests for sexual favors, and other verbal, physical, written, or visual conduct of a sexual nature.
- We do not tolerate acts or behaviors that exploit the physical or mental vulnerability of another, take advantage of a power imbalance, compromise one's moral integrity, or create an intimidating, offensive, abusive, or hostile environment.
- We do not put others at risk by attending CSR activities when one knows they or their child/guest have an infectious illness.
- We recognize the distinct challenges related to mental health disabilities, particularly if a person's mental health lapse leads to their objectionable or unethical behavior that is reported as an Ethics Code violation. Unless a person voluntarily discloses their mental illness, it is usually invisible to the untrained eye. Consequently, allegations of ethics violations that are or could be related to mental health issues will be carefully and compassionately considered by the Ethics Team.
- We strive to protect those who appear to be the victims of abuse or neglect, including abuse of the mentally impaired, spousal abuse, child abuse, elder abuse, verbal abuse, physical abuse, and any other type of domestic violence.

WE CONDUCT OURSELVES WITH HONESTY (YOSHER)

CSR expects all who engage in our community to conduct themselves in an honest manner.

- We promote open and honest communication that allows for addressing differences constructively.
- We conduct all financial affairs with complete honesty and integrity and refrain from financial impropriety (e.g., embezzlement, nonpayment of just debts, inappropriate use of funds, or tax evasion).
- We protect the confidentiality of privileged information, either about an individual or the synagogue, and do not disclose it without permission. This includes, for example, personnel information such as employment status, compensation, and performance review, as well as personal information about an individual's health, financial status, or family matters.
- We respect the efforts of others and do not take credit for their work.
- We recognize, respect, and protect the intellectual property rights of our synagogue and others. We obey copyright laws governing the use and distribution of published materials.
- We make decisions regarding synagogue-related matters with transparency, openness and accountability, unless confidentiality dictates otherwise.
- We report unethical or illegal conduct to appropriate internal and/or external authorities. We ensure rigorous adherence to effective procedures that respond to grievances, incidents and needs.

Conflicts of Interest

Synagogue partners should avoid conflicts of interest and the appearance of conflicts of interest.

- A potential conflict of interest can be difficult to discern. It may arise in settings beyond the obvious business relationship setting (e.g., the acceptance of gifts, honoraria, royalties, or using intellectual property that belongs to the synagogue). Congregants and staff members must consult others about any real or potential conflicts and assist one another to resolve any such conflicts.

Confidentiality

We should be mindful of when our personal communications could be misconstrued as representing the views of the synagogue or another organization, and we should refrain from communications that are inappropriate (e.g., obscene content and defamatory statements).

- There are inherent challenges in using the internet, email, and social media, as well as texting and other electronic communications. Synagogue members should demonstrate respect, professionalism, and good judgment when using any such technology. Special care must be taken to protect confidentiality when using social media (e.g., blogs, message boards, chat rooms, electronic newsletters, online forums, social networking sites, and other sites and services that permit users to share information and photography with others).

WE ACT WITH HONOR (KAVOD)

CSR values personal integrity.

- We act solely according to the synagogue's best interests when acting on its behalf.
- We refrain from using one's synagogue position for personal advantage or benefit. For example, we refrain from hiring or firing, rewarding or punishing staff or volunteers, and awarding or denying contracts based solely on personal considerations such as favoritism, nepotism, or bribery.
- We are bound by sacred obligation to uphold financial agreements made with the synagogue. If a change in personal circumstances occurs, we will inform those charged with managing synagogue finances and make appropriate arrangements.
- We conduct employment practices and related decision-making in an ethical and legal manner.
- We report unethical or illegal conduct to appropriate internal and/or external authorities. We ensure rigorous adherence to effective procedures that respond to grievances, incidents and needs.

CSR's Code of Ethics will be made available to all congregants, staff, and clergy.

The fact that CSR has a Code of Ethics will be made known in a prominent and appropriate manner at the entrance to CSR and readily available in its entirety at the synagogue office. The Code will also be published on the congregation website.

CSR's Code of Ethics is a living document. Review and revision of the code is a recurring responsibility of the synagogue and is essential to ensuring the code's currency and relevance, and to enhancing its accuracy and comprehensiveness. Modifications to the code may be proposed to the Ethics Task Force by any congregant or staff member. Revisions to the code shall be approved by the synagogue board of directors.

II: PROCEDURES FOR ADDRESSING ALLEGATIONS OF UNETHICAL BEHAVIOR

THE FOLLOWING PROCEDURES DELINEATE HOW ALLEGATIONS OF UNETHICAL BEHAVIOR BASED ON THE CSR STANDARDS FOR ETHICAL AND CIVIL CONDUCT WILL BE ADDRESSED.

- CSR president/co-presidents will appoint a congregant to chair an ad hoc Ethics Team for receiving and addressing allegations of unethical behavior. The Ethics Team shall consist of the Ethics Task Force chair, president/co-presidents, senior rabbi, cantor and executive director. They will also select a minimum of three

congregants as Ethics Team members based on the following qualities: integrity, leadership, independence, and ability to handle challenging situations. Members of the Ethics Team must recuse themselves if an allegation pertains to them in any way.

- An allegation of unethical behavior, oral or in writing, should be directed to an Ethics Team member, i.e., the synagogue president/co-presidents, senior rabbi, cantor, executive director, or Ethics Task Force chair. To initiate an Ethics Team process, the Ethics Team member who received the allegation will share the information with the other Ethics Team members.
- In response to an allegation of unethical behavior, the Ethics Team will speak to all parties involved, gather all the facts, and review documents along with any other relevant materials that will inform their further actions.
- Full consideration should be given to the goals of healing and reconciliation in determining how to proceed and what actions should be taken. This suggestion is not intended to minimize the importance or the consequence of violating this code. Rather, given the broad range of possible code violations, responses to such behavior should be proportional and sensitive to the fact that these are situations in which we are dealing with fellow members of our sacred community.
- If the alleged ethics violator is a member of a professional organization with its own code of ethics [i.e., Central Conference of American Rabbis (CCAR), American Conference of Cantors (ACC), National Association for Temple Administration (NATA), Association of Reform Jewish Educators (ARJE)] the Ethics Team should consult with the ethics committee chair of that organization, to coordinate our congregation's process with that of the professional organization, balancing the needs of our congregation and those of the professional body.
- CSR members will take no adverse action or retaliation against anyone making a complaint in good faith of a possible violation of the Code of Ethics. Anyone deliberately making a false accusation will be in violation of this Ethics Code and subject to its procedures.
- When an allegation is reported to the synagogue president/co-presidents, rabbi, cantor, executive director, or Ethics Task Force chair, the ensuing meeting of the Ethics Team may determine it necessary or simply prudent to consult or hire legal counsel when addressing allegations of unethical behavior, especially allegations involving more grievous allegations. Notice may also need to be made to the synagogue's insurance company.
- CSR's Code of Conduct has been and will periodically be reviewed by appropriate legal counsel to ensure it is always in accord with all federal, state and local laws addressing nonprofits, employment matters, administrative or law enforcement reporting duties, and other relevant legal requirements.
- While there is no time limit to making an allegation of unethical behavior, the time that has elapsed since the alleged violation will be one of many factors in the totality of circumstances considered by the Ethics Committee.
- During information gathering and/or consideration of a resolution for an ethics violation, the committee shall bear in mind that, as a sacred community, healing and reconciliation are important goals to achieve.

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